

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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R 241138Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5994

INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T BANGKOK 13274

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP

SUBJECT: CODEL WOLFF: CONGRESSMAN APPROACHED BY
INTERMEDIARY FOR BURMESE DISSIDENTS REGARDING OPIUM DEAL

REF: BANGKOK 12908

1. AT THE DCM'S REQUEST, BRITISH TV JOURNALIST ADRIAN COWELL CALLED ON THE DCM AT THE CHANCERY AUGUST 22. THE DCM SAID WE WERE INTERESTED IN THE PROPOSALS THAT MR. COWELL HAD GIVEN TO CONGRESSMAN WOLFF BUT THAT THE USG COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT MAKE AN AGREEMENT OR HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH THE SHAN STATE DISSIDENTS BECAUSE THIS WOULD DESTROY GUB COOPERATION IN SOLVING THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM AND WOULD INVOLVE THE USG IN SUPPORTING AN INSURGENCY MOVEMENT. THE DCM ASKED WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE SHAN STATE DISSIDENTS TO WORK THROUGH THE GUB. WE WOULD BE WILLING TO AID THE SHANS IN GETTING OUT OF THE OPIUM TRADE ONLY IF THERE WERE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE GUB.

2. COWELL TOLD THE DCM THAT SHANS DO NOT EXPECT THE USG TO DO ANYTHING NOW. THEY MERELY HOPE TO INFORM US ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE SHAN STATES AND TO MAKE US AWARE THAT THE BUG CANNOT SOLVE THE OPIUM PROBLEM.

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3. THE DCM SAID THAT WE DO NOT WANT TO GIVE ANY ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE SHAN DISSIDENTS AND THAT WE WILL NOT DEAL WITH THEM. WE HAVE STRICTLY FORBIDDEN ANYONE IN THIS MISSION FROM BEING IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE SHANS, IF THEY WANT TO PASS INFORMATION THROUGH A THIRD PARTY SUCH AS MR. COWELL, WE WILL LISTEN. THE DCM REITERATED THAT THE ONLY WAY WE COULD PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE SHANS WOULD BE THROUGH AND WITH THE FULL APPROVAL OF THE GUB.

4. AT COWELL'S REQUEST, COWELL CALLED ON THE DCM AGAIN AUGUST 24. COWELL SAID HE HAD SEEN SAO SENG SURK, PRESIDENT OF THE SHAN STATES ARMY (SSA), SINCE COWELL'S LAST MEETING WITH THE DCM. COWELL HAD TOLD SAO THAT THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY OF FORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THBIVVG EXCEPT THROUGH THE GUB. SAO REPLIED THAT AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SSA AND GUB IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE THE COMMUNISTS ARE ADVANCING TOWARD THE SHAN STATES, THE SSA IS AFRAID OF BEING CAUGHT BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND THE BURMESE ARMY. THE SSA DOES NOT WANT TO JOIN THE COMMUNISTS OR TO FIGHT ON THE SIDE OF THE GUB. THE SSA WOULD, HOWEVER, LIKE TO MAKE A SECRET DEAL WITH THE GUB TO SUSPEND OPERATIONS AGAINST THE BURMESE ARMY IF THE BURMESE ARMY AGREES TO REALLY FIGHT THE COMMUNISTS.

5. COWELL SAID THAT A TRUCE BETWEEN THE GUB AND THE SSA MIGHT PROVIDE THE PROPER ENVIRONMENT FOR AN AGREEMENT ON THE OPIUM PROBLEM. SAO HAD SUGGESTED A UN SURVEY OF OPIUM GROWING AND TRADING IN THE SHAN STATES. IF THE GUB ALLOWS SUCH A SURVEY, THE SSA WULD PERMIT THE CONDUCT OF THE SURVEY CSESPOSAREAS IT CONTROLS AND WOULD GIVE INFORMATION TO THE UN.

6. COWELL SAID THE SSA DOES NOT WANT TO TALK TO THE GUB IN THAILAND BECAUSE THE SSA FEARS THE THAI MIGHT TAKE OVER THE NEGOTIATIONS. SAO HAD ASKED COWELL TO PROPOSE A TRUCE TO THE BURMESE EMBASSY IN LONDON. IF THESE CONTACTS ARE SUCCESSFUL, SAO IS WILLING TO MEET GUB REPRESENTATIVES IN THAILAND, BUT NOT UNDER

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RTG AUSPICES.

7. THE DCM THANKED COWELL FOR THIS LATEST INFORMATION, BUT REITERATED THAT THE USG CANNOT DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE SSA EVEN IF THERE IS A TRUCE BETWEEN THE SSA AND THG GUB. WE WOULD STILL HAVE TO WORK THROUGH THE GUB IN ANY DISCUSSION OF THE OPIUM PROBLEM IN THE SHAN STATES.

8. COMMENT: THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT MAY INDICATE THAT SHANS ARE FEELING THE HEAT AS COMMUNISTS ADVANCE AND MAY BE ON WAY TO BECOMING MORE FLEXIBLE. COWELL DID REITERATE, HOWEVER, HIS BELIEF THAT SHANS WOULD, IF "TRUCE" SUCH AS HE OUTLINED WERE CONCLUDED, EXPECT GUB TO RETURN TO CONSITUTION. COWELL PLANS TO LEAVE IN ABOUT A WEEK AND WILL CONTACT GUV EMBASSY IN LONDON AS REQUESTED BY SAO. IF THERE IS ANYTHING TO THIS OVERTURE, THIS WOULD SEEM TO BE A CUMBERSOME WAY OF MAKING CONTACT.
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